

PLEADING, NOT CONTRADICTING NO. 2129

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 9, 1890,
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“She said, Truth, Lord: yet.”
Matthew 15:27.*

DID YOU notice, in the reading of this narrative of the Syro-Phoenician woman, the two facts mentioned in the 21st and 22nd verses? “Then Jesus went from there, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. And, behold, a woman of Canaan came from that region.” See, Jesus goes towards the coast of Sidon on the land side, and the woman of Canaan comes from the seashore to meet Him, and so they come to the same town. May we find that case repeated this morning in this Tabernacle! May our Lord Jesus come into this congregation with power to cast out the devil, and may someone—no, may *many*—have come to this place on purpose to seek divine grace at His hands! Blessed shall be this day’s meeting! See how the grace of God arranges things; Jesus and the seeker have a common attraction. He comes and she comes. It would have been of no use her coming from the coast of Tyre and Sidon if the Lord Jesus had not also come down to the Israelite border of Phoenicia to meet her. His coming makes her coming a success! What a happy circumstance when Christ meets the sinner, and the sinner meets his Lord!

Our Lord Jesus, as the Good Shepherd came that way, drawn by the instincts of His heart—He was seeking after lost ones, and He seemed to feel that there was one to be found on the borders of Tyre and Sidon, and therefore, He must go that way to find that one. It does not appear that He preached, or did anything special upon the road. He left the 99 by the Sea of Galilee to seek that one lost sheep by the Mediterranean shore! When He had dealt with her, He went back again to His old haunts in Galilee.

Our Lord was drawn towards this woman, but she, also, was driven towards Him. What made her seek Him? Strange to say, a *devil* had a hand in it; but not so as to give the devil any of the praise. The truth was that a gracious God used the devil himself, to drive this woman to Jesus; for her daughter was “grievously vexed with a devil,” and she could not bear to stay at home and see her child in such misery. Oh, how often does a great sorrow drive men and women to Christ, even as a fierce wind compels the mariner to hasten to the harbor! I have known a domestic affliction—a daughter sorely vexed, influence the heart of a mother to seek the Savior. And, no doubt, many a father, broken in spirit by the likelihood of losing a darling child, has turned his face towards the Lord Jesus in his distress. Ah, my Lord! You have many ways of bringing Your wandering sheep back, and among them You even send the black dog of sorrow and of sickness after them; this dog comes into the house, and his howls are so dreadful that the poor lost sheep flies to the Shepherd for shelter! God make it so this morning with any of you who have a great trouble at home! May your boy’s sickness work your health! Yes, may your girl’s death be the means of the father’s spiritual life! Oh, that your soul and Jesus may meet this day! Your Savior drawn by love, and your poor heart driven by anguish—may you thus be brought to a gracious meeting!

Now, you would suppose that as the two were seeking each other, the happy meeting, and the gracious blessing would be very easily brought about; but we have an old proverb that, “the course of true love never runs smooth,” and the course of true faith, for certain, is seldom without trials. Here was genuine love in the heart of Christ towards this woman, and genuine faith in her heart towards Christ; but difficulties sprang up which we should never have looked for. It is for the good of us all that they occurred, but we could not have anticipated them. Perhaps there were more difficulties in the way of this woman than of anybody else that ever came to Jesus in the days of His flesh. I never saw the Savior in such a mood as when He spoke to this woman of great faith. Did you ever read of His speaking such

rough words? Did such a hard sentence at any other time, ever fall from His lips as, “It is not meet to take the children’s bread, and to cast it to dogs”? Ah, He knew her well, and He knew that she could stand the trial, and would be greatly benefited by it; and that He would be glorified by her faith throughout all future ages! Therefore with good reason He put her through the athletic exercises which train a vigorous faith. Doubtless, for our sakes, He drew her through a test to which He would never have exposed her had she been a weakling unable to sustain it. She was trained and developed by His rebuffs. While His wisdom tried her, His grace sustained her!

Now, see how He began. The Savior came to the town, wherever it was—but He was not there in public. On the contrary, He sought seclusion. Mark tells us, in his seventh chapter, at the 24th verse, “From there He arose and went into the borders of Tyre and Sidon, and entered into a house, and would have no man know it: but He could not be hid. For a certain woman, whose young daughter had an unclean spirit, heard of Him, and came and fell at His feet.”

Why is He hiding from her? He does not usually avoid the quest of the seeking soul. “Where is He?” she asks His disciples. They give her no information—they had their Master’s orders to let Him remain in hiding. He sought quiet, and needed it, and so they discreetly held their tongues. Yet she found Him, and fell at His feet. Half a hint was dropped—she took up the trail and followed it until she discovered the house; and sought the Lord in His abode. Here was the beginning of her trial—the Savior was in hiding. “But He could not be hid” from her eager search. She was all eyes and ears for Him, and nothing can be hid from an anxious mother eager to bless her child! Disturbed by her, the Blessed One comes into the street, and His disciples surround Him. She determines to be heard over their heads, and therefore she begins to cry aloud, “Have mercy upon me, O Lord, You son of David.” As He walks along, she still cries out with mighty cries and pleadings till the streets ring with her voice; and He who “would have no man know it” is proclaimed in the market place! Peter does not like it; he prefers quiet worship. John feels a great deal disturbed by the noise—he lost a sentence just now, a very precious sentence which the Lord was uttering. The woman’s noise was very distracting to everybody, and so the disciples came to Jesus, and they said, “Send her away, send her away! Do something for her, or tell her to be gone, for she cries after us; we have no peace for her clamor—we cannot hear You speak because of her piteous cries.” Meanwhile she, perceiving them speaking to Jesus, comes nearer, breaks into the inner circle, falls down before Him, worships Him, and utters this plaintive prayer—“Lord, help me.” There is more power in worship than in noise! She has taken a step in advance. Our Lord has not yet answered her a single word; He has heard what she said, no doubt, but He has not answered a word to her as yet. All that He has done is to say to His disciples, “I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” That has not prevented her nearer approach, or stopped her prayer, for now she pleads, “Lord, help me.”

At length the Blessed One speaks to her. Greatly to our surprise, it is a chill rebuff. What a cold word it is! How cutting! I dare not say how cruel—yet it seemed so. “It is not meet to take the children’s bread, and to cast it to dogs.” Now what will the woman do? She is near the Savior; she has an audience with Him, such as it is. She is on her knees before Him, and He appears to repulse her! How will she act now? Here is the point about which I am going to speak; she will not be repulsed, she perseveres, she advances nearer—she actually turns the rebuff into a plea! She has come for a blessing, and a blessing she believes that she shall have! And she means to plead for it till she wins it! So she deals with the Savior after a very heroic manner, and in the wisest possible style—from which I want every seeker to learn a lesson at this time, that he, like she, may win with Christ, and hear the Master say to him this morning, “Great is your faith; be it unto you even as you will.”

Three pieces of advice I gather from this woman’s example. First, *agree with the Lord whatever He says*. Say, “Truth, Lord; truth, Lord.” Say, “Yes,” to all His words. Secondly, *plead with the Lord*—“Truth, Lord; yet.” “Yet.” Think of another truth of God, and mention it to Him as a plea. Say, “Lord, I must maintain my hold. I must plead with You yet.” And thirdly, *in any case have faith in the Lord, whatever He says*. However He tries you, still believe in Him with unstaggering faith, and know for sure that He deserves your utmost confidence in His love and power.

I. My first advice to every heart here seeking the Savior is this, **AGREE WITH THE LORD.** In the Revised Version we read that she said, “Yes, Lord.” Whatever Jesus said, she did not contradict Him in the least. I like the old translation, “Truth, Lord,” for it is very expressive. She did not say, “It is hard, or unkind,” but, “It is true. It is true that it is not meet to take the children’s bread, and to cast it to dogs. It is true that compared with Israel I am a dog—for me to gain this blessing would be like a dog’s feeding on the children’s bread. Truth, Lord. Truth, Lord.” Now, dear friends, if you are dealing with the Lord for life and death, *never contradict His Word.* You will never come unto perfect peace if you are in a contradicting humor, for that is a proud and unacceptable condition of mind. He that reads his Bible to find fault with it will soon discover that the Bible finds fault with him. It may be said of the Book of God as of its Author—“If you walk contrary to Me, I will walk contrary to you.” Of this Book I may truly say, “With the obstinate You will show Yourself obstinate.”

Remember, dear friends, that *if the Lord reminds you of your unworthiness, and your unfitness, He only tells you what is true*, and it will be your wisdom to say, “Truth, Lord.” Scripture describes you as having a depraved nature—say, “Truth, Lord.” It describes you as going astray like a lost sheep, and the charge is true; it describes you as having a deceitful heart, and just such a heart you have. Therefore say, “Truth, Lord.” It represents you as, “without strength,” and, “without hope.” Let your answer be, “Truth, Lord.” The Bible never gives unrenewed human nature a good word, nor does it deserve it. It exposes our corruptions, and lays bare our falseness, pride, and unbelief. Quibble not at the faithfulness of the Word of God; take the lowest place, and admit you are a *sinner*—lost, ruined and undone. If the Scripture should seem to degrade you, do not take offense, but feel that it deals honestly with you; never let proud nature contradict the Lord, for this is to increase your sin. This woman took the very lowest possible place. She not only admitted that she was like one of the little dogs, but she put herself under the table, and under the children’s table, rather than under the master’s table. She said, “The dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table.” Most of you have supposed that she referred to the crumbs that fell from the table of the master of the house himself. If you will kindly look at the passage, you will see that it is not so. “Their masters” refers to *several* masters; the word is *plural*, and refers to the *children* who were the little masters of the little dogs. Thus she humbled herself to be not only as a dog to the Lord, but as a dog to the house of Israel—to the Jews.

This was going very far, indeed, for a woman of proud Sidonian blood, to admit that the house of Israel were to her as masters; that these disciples who had said just now, “Send her away,” stood in the same relation to her as the children of the family stand in towards the little dogs under the table! Great faith is always sister to great *humility*; it does not matter how low Christ puts her, she *sits there*. “Truth, Lord.” I earnestly recommend every hearer of mine to consent unto the Lord’s verdict, and never to raise an argument against the sinner’s Friend. When your heart is heavy; when you have a sense of being the greatest of sinners, I pray you remember that you are a *greater* sinner than you *think* yourself to be! Though conscience has rated you very low, you may go lower, still, and yet be in your right place, for, to tell the truth, you are as bad as bad can be; you are worse than your darkest thoughts have ever painted you; you are a wretch most undeserving and hell-deserving! And apart from sovereign grace your case is hopeless. If you were now in hell, you would have no cause to complain against the justice of God, for you deserve to be there. I would to God that every hearer here who has not yet found mercy would consent to the severest declarations of God’s Word; for they are all true and true to him in particular. Oh, that you would say, “Yes, Lord—I have not a syllable to say in self-defense”!

And, next, *if it should appear to your humbled heart to be a very strange thing for you to think of being saved, do not fight against that belief.* If a sense of divine justice should suggest to you: “What? You saved? Then you will be the greatest wonder on earth! What? You saved? Surely God will have gone beyond all former mercy in pardoning such a one as you are! In your case He would have taken the children’s bread and cast it to a dog! You are so unworthy, and so insignificant and useless, that even if you are saved, you will be good for nothing in holy service.” How can you expect the blessing? Do not attempt to argue to the contrary. Seek not to magnify yourself, but cry, “Lord, I agree with Your valuation of me. I freely admit that if I am forgiven; if I am made a child of God, and if I enter heaven, I

shall be the greatest marvel of immeasurable love and boundless grace that ever lived on earth or in heaven.”

We should be the more ready to give our assent and consent to every syllable of the divine word since *Jesus knows better than we know ourselves*. The Word of God knows more about us than we can ever discover about ourselves; we are partial to ourselves, and hence we are half blind; our judgment always fails to hold the balance evenly when our own case is in the weighing. What man is there who is not on good terms with himself? Your faults, of course, are always excusable; and if you do a little good, why, it deserves to be talked of, and to be estimated at the rate of diamonds of the first water! Each one of us is a very superior person—so our proud heart tells us. Our Lord Jesus does not flatter us; He lets us see our case as it is; His searching eyes perceive the naked truth of things, and as “the faithful and true Witness” He deals with us after the rule of uprightness. O seeking soul, Jesus loves you too well to flatter you! Therefore I pray you, have such confidence in Him that however much He, by His Word and Spirit may rebuke, reprove, and even condemn you, you may without hesitation reply, “Truth, Lord! Truth, Lord!”

Nothing can be gained by arguing with the Savior. A beggar stands at your door and asks for charity. He goes the wrong way to work if he begins a discussion with you, and contradicts your statements. If beggars must not be choosers, certainly they must not be controversialists! If a beggar will dispute, let him dispute—but let him give up begging! If he cavils as to how he shall receive your gift, or how or what you shall give him, he is likely to be sent about his business. A critical sinner disputing with his Savior is a fool in capital letters! As for me, my mind is made up that I will quarrel with *anybody* sooner than with my Savior; and especially I will contend with myself, and pick a desperate quarrel with my own pride, rather than have a shade of difference with my Lord! To contend with one’s Benefactor is folly, indeed! For the justly condemned to quibble with the Lawgiver in whom is vested the prerogative of pardon would be folly! Instead of that, with heart and soul I cry, “Lord, whatever I find in Your Word. Whatever I read in Holy Scripture which is the revelation of Your mind, I do believe it! I will believe it! I must believe it! And I, therefore, say, ‘Truth, Lord!’ It is all true, though it condemns me forever.”

Now, mark this—if you find your heart agreeing with what Jesus says, even when He answers you roughly, you may depend upon it, *this is a work of divine grace*—for human nature is very upstart, and stands very much upon its silly dignity; and therefore it contradicts the Lord when He deals truthfully with it, and humbles it. Human nature, if you want to see it in its true condition, is that naked thing over yonder which so proudly aims at covering itself with a dress of its own devising. See, it sews fig leaves together to make itself an apron! What a destitute object! With its withered leaves about it, it seems worse than naked! Yet this wretched human nature proudly rebels against salvation by Christ! It will not hear of imputed righteousness—its own righteousness is far dearer. Woe be to the crown of pride which rivals the Lord Christ! If, my hearer, you are of another mind, and are willing to call yourself a sinner—lost, ruined and condemned—it is well with you! If you are of this mind—that whatever humbling truth the Spirit of God may teach you in the Word, or teach by the conviction of your conscience, you will at once agree with and confess, “It is even so”—then the Spirit of God has brought you to this humble, and truthful, and obedient condition, and things are going hopefully with you!

The Lord Jesus has not come to save you proud and arrogant ones who sit on your thrones, and look down contemptuously on others. Sit there as long as you can! Sit there until your thrones, and yourselves dissolve into perdition—there is no hope for you! But you who lie upon the dunghill; you who feel as worthless as the broken potsherds around you; you who mourn that you cannot rise from that dunghill without divine help—you are the men and women whom He will lift from your mean estate, and set you among princes, even the princes of His people! See the spokes of yonder wheel! They that are highest shall be lowest—they that are lowest shall be raised on high! This is how the Lord turns things upside down—“He has put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree; He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He has sent empty away.” If you find it in your heart to say, “Truth, Lord,” to all that the Holy Spirit teaches, then surely that same Spirit is at work upon

your soul, leading you to look to Jesus, and causing you to give your heart's consent to the way of salvation through the merit of the Redeemer's blood.

II. And now my second point is this—although you must not argue with Christ, you may PLEAD WITH HIM. “Truth, Lord,” she says. But she adds, “yet.”

Here, then, is my first lesson—*set one truth over against another*. Do not contradict a frowning truth of God, but bring up a smiling one to meet it! Remember how the Jews were saved out of the hands of their enemies in the days of Haman and Mordecai? The king issued a decree that on a certain day the people might rise up against the Jews, and slay them, and take their possessions as a spoil. Now, according to the laws of the Medes and Persians, this could not be altered—the decree must stand. What then? How was it to be overturned? Why, by meeting that ordinance by another! Another decree is issued that although the people might rise against the Jews, yet the Jews might defend themselves! And if anybody dared to hurt them, the Jew might slay *them* and take *their* property! One decree thus counteracted another. How often we may use the holy art of looking from one doctrine to another! If a truth of God looks black upon me, I shall not be wise to be always dwelling upon it, but it will be my wisdom to examine the whole range of the truth of God, and see if there is not some other doctrine which will give me hope. David practiced this when he said of himself, “So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before You.” And then he most confidently added, “Nevertheless I am continually with You: You have held me by my right hand.” He does not contradict himself—and yet the second utterance removes all the bitterness which the first sentence left upon the palate. The two sentences together set forth the supreme grace of God who enabled a poor beast-like being to commune with Himself. I beg you to learn this holy art of setting one truth side by side with another, that thus you may have a fair view of the whole situation, and may not despair.

For instance, I meet with men who say, “O sir, sin is an awful thing! It condemns me! I feel I can never answer the Lord for my iniquities, nor stand in His holy presence.” This is assuredly true; but remember another truth of God: “The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” “He was made sin for us, who knew no sin.” “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” Set the truth of the sin-bearing of our Lord over against the guilt and curse of sin due to yourself apart from your great Substitute.

“The Lord has an elect people,” cries one, “and this discourages me.” Why should it? Do not contradict that truth of God—believe it as you read it in God's Word; but hear how Jesus puts it: “I thank You, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because You have hid these things from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them unto babes.” To you who are weak, simple, and trustful as babes, the doctrine is full of comfort! If the Lord will save a number that no man can number, why should He not save you? It is true it is written, “All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me”; but it is also written, “And him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.” Let the second half of the saying be accepted as well as the first half!

Some are stumbled by the sovereignty of God. He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy. He may justly ask, “Shall I not do as I will with My own?” Beloved, do not dispute the rights of the eternal God! It is the Lord; let Him do as seems good to Him. Do not quarrel with the King; but come humbly to Him, and plead—“O Lord, You alone have the right to pardon, but Your Word declares that if we confess our sins, You are faithful and just to forgive us our sins; and You have said that whoever believes in the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved.” This pleading will prevail! Kick not at the truth of God lest you dash your naked foot against iron pricks. Yet, dwell not on one truth till it distracts you, but look at others till they cheer you! Submit to *all* the truth of God, but plead on your own behalf that which seems to you to look favorably upon *you*. When you read, “You must be born-again,” do not be angry! It is true that to be born-again is a work beyond your power—it is the work of the Holy Spirit—and this need of a work beyond your reach may well distress you. But that third chapter of John says, “You must be born-again,” also says, “God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” Thus it is clear that he that believes in Jesus *is* born-again! I pray you, have an eye to all the land of truth and when you seem to be persecuted in one city of truth, go to another—for there is a city of refuge even for you! Besides, there is

a bright side to every truth of God if you have but the wit to spy it out. The same key which locks will also unlock—very much depends on the turn of the key—and still more on the turn of your thoughts.

This brings me to a second remark: *draw comfort even from a hard truth*. Take this advice in preference to that which I have already given. The Authorized translation here is very good, but I must confess that it is not quite as true to the woman's meaning as the Revised Version. She did not say, "Truth, Lord: *yet*," as if she were raising an objection, as I have already put it to you. But she said, "Truth, Lord, *for*." I have gone with the old translation because it expresses the way in which our mind too generally looks at things. We fancy that we set one truth over *against* another, whereas all truths of God are *agreed*, and cannot be in conflict. Out of the very truth which looks darkest we may gain consolation! She said, "Yes, Lord; *for* the dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters' table." She did not draw comfort from another truth which seemed to neutralize the first; but, as the bee sucks honey from the nettle, so did she gather encouragement from the severe Word of the Lord—"It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs." She said, "That is true, Lord, for even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table." She had not to turn what Christ said upside down—she took it as it stood, and spied out comfort in it. Earnestly would I urge you to learn the art of deriving comfort from every statement of God's Word; not necessarily bringing up a second doctrine, but believing that even the present truth which bears a threatening aspect is yet your friend.

Do I hear you say, "How can I have hope? For salvation is of the Lord." Why, that is the very reason why you should be filled with hope, and seek salvation of the Lord alone! If it were of yourself, you might despair; but as it is of the Lord, you may have hope.

Do you groan out, "Alas, I can do nothing"? What of that? The Lord can do everything! Since salvation is of the Lord alone, ask Him to be its Alpha and Omega to you. Do you groan, "I know I must repent, but I am so unfeeling that I cannot reach the right measure of tenderness"? This is true, and therefore the Lord Jesus is exalted on high to give repentance! You will no more repent in your own power than you will go to heaven in your own merit; but the Lord will grant you repentance unto life; for this, also, is a fruit of the Spirit!

Beloved, when I was under a sense of sin, I heard the doctrine of divine sovereignty—"He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy"—but that did not frighten me at all, for I felt more hopeful of divine grace through the sovereign will of God than by any other way! If pardon is not a matter of human deserving, but of divine prerogative, then there is hope for me! Why should not *I* be forgiven as well as others? If the Lord had only three elect ones, and these were chosen according to His own good pleasure, why should I not be one of them? I laid myself at His feet, and gave up every hope but that which flowed from His mercy. Knowing that He would save a number that no man could number, and that He would save every soul that believed in Jesus, I believed and was saved! It was well for me that salvation did not turn upon *merit*, for I had no merit whatever! If it remained with sovereign grace, then I, also, could go through that door; for the Lord might as well save me as any other sinner. And inasmuch as I read, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out," I came, by His grace, and He did not cast me out! Rightly understood, every truth in God's Word leads to Jesus, and no single Word drives the seeking sinner back. If you are a fine fellow, full of your own righteousness, every gospel truth looks black to you; but if you are a sinner deserving nothing of God but wrath; if in your heart you confess that you deserve condemnation—you are the kind of man that Christ came to save! You are the sort of man that God chose from before the foundation of the world, and you may, without any hesitancy, come and put your trust in Jesus who is the sinner's Savior! Believing in Him you shall receive immediate salvation!

I will not give you further instances and particulars, for time would fail me. I leave you just there with this advice—it is not yours to raise questions, but submissively to say, "Truth, Lord." Then it is your wisdom to set one truth of God over against another till you have learned the better plan of finding light in the dark truth itself. God help you to fetch honey from the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock by a simple and unquestioning faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

III. Thirdly, in any case, whatever Christ says or does not say, HAVE FAITH IN HIM. Look at this woman's faith, and try to copy it. It grew in its apprehension of Jesus.

First, He is *the Lord of mercy*—she cried, “Have mercy on me.” Have faith enough, dear hearer, to believe that you need mercy. Mercy is not for the meritorious—the claim of the meritorious is for *justice*; not for mercy. Only the *guilty* need and seek mercy. Believe that God delights in mercy, delights to give grace where it cannot be deserved, delights to forgive where there is no reason for forgiveness but His own goodness. Believe also that the Lord Jesus Christ whom we preach to you is the incarnation of mercy—His very *existence* is mercy to you, His every word means mercy; His life, His death, His intercession in heaven, all mean mercy, mercy, mercy, nothing but mercy! You need divine mercy, and Jesus is the embodiment of divine mercy—He is the Savior for you! Believe in Him, and the mercy of God is yours.

This woman also called Him *Son of David* in which she recognized His manhood, and His kingship towards man. Think of Jesus Christ as God over all, blessed forever—He that made the heaven and the earth, and upholds all things by the word of His power. Know that He became man, veiling His Godhead in this poor clay of ours; He hung as a babe upon a woman’s breast. He sat as a weary man upon the curb of a well. He died with malefactors on the cross—and all this out of love to man! Can you not trust this Son of David? David was very popular because he went in and out among the people, and proved himself the people’s king. Jesus is such. David gathered to him a company of men who were greatly attached to him because when they came to him, they were a broken-down crew; they were in debt and discontented; all the outcasts from Saul’s dominions came around David, and he became a captain to them. My Lord Jesus Christ is One chosen out of the people, chosen by God on purpose to be a brother to us, a brother born for adversity, a brother who has come to associate with us despite our meanness and misery. He is the friend of men and women who are ruined by their guilt and sin. “This man receives sinners, and eats with them.” Jesus is the willing leader of a people sinful and defiled, whom He raises to justification and holiness, and makes to dwell with Himself in glory forever! Oh, will you not trust such a Savior as this? My Lord did not come into the world to save superior people who think themselves born saints. I say again, you may sit upon thrones till you and your thrones go down to perdition! But Jesus came to save the lost, the ruined, the guilty, the unworthy. Let such come clustering round Him like the bees around the queen bee, for He is ordained on purpose to collect the Lord’s chosen ones. As it is written, “Unto Him shall the gathering of the people be.”

This believing woman might have been cheered by another theme. Our Lord said to His disciples, “I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” “Ah,” she thinks, “He is a shepherd for lost sheep. Whatever His flock may be, *He is a shepherd*, and He has a heart of compassion for poor lost sheep—surely He is One to whom *I* may look with confidence.” Ah, dear hearer! My Lord Jesus Christ is a shepherd by office and by nature, and if you are a lost sheep this is good tidings for you! There is a holy instinct in Him which makes Him gather the lambs with His arms, and causes Him to search out the lost ones who were scattered in the cloudy and dark day. Trust Him to seek you! Yes, come to Him now, and leave yourselves with Him.

Further than that, this woman had a faith in Christ that He was like *a great householder*. She seems to say, “Those disciples are children who sit at table, and He feeds them on the bread of His love; He makes for them so great a feast, and He gives to them so much food that if my daughter were healed, it would be a great and blessed thing to me, but to Him it would be no more than if a crumb fell under the table and a dog fed upon it.” She does not ask to have a crumb thrown to her, but only to be allowed to pick up a crumb that has fallen from the table. She asks not even for a crumb which the Lord may drop—but for one which the *children* have let fall; they are generally great crumb-makers. I notice in the Greek, that as the word for “dogs” is, “little dogs,” so the word rendered, “crumbs,” is, “little crumbs”—small, inconsequential morsels which fall by accident. Think of this faith! To have the devil cast out of her daughter was the greatest thing she could imagine, and yet she had such a belief in the greatness of the Lord Christ that she thought it would be no more to Him to make her daughter well, than for a great housekeeper to let a poor little dog eat a tiny crumb that had been dropped by a child! Is not that splendid faith? And now, can you exercise such a faith? Can you believe it, you, a condemned, lost sinner—that if God saves you it will be the greatest wonder that ever was, and yet that to Jesus, who made Himself a sacrifice for sin—it will be no more than if this day your dog or your cat should eat a

tiny morsel that one of your children had dropped from the table? Can you think Jesus to be so great that what is heaven to you will be only a crumb to Him? Can you believe that He can save you readily? As for me, I believe my Lord to be such a Savior that I can trust my soul wholly to Him, and that without difficulty! And I will tell you something else—if I had all *your* souls in my body, I would trust them *all* to Jesus! Yes, and if I had a million sinful souls of my own, I would freely trust the Lord Christ with the whole of them, and I would say, “I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him against that day.”

Do not suppose that I speak thus because I am conscious of any goodness of my own? Far from it—my trust is in no degree in myself or anything I can do or be. If I were good, I could not trust in Jesus. Why should I? I should trust myself! But because I have nothing of my own, I am obliged to live by trust, and I am rejoiced that I may do so. My Lord gives me unlimited credit at the Bank of Faith! I am very deeply in debt to Him, and I am resolved to be more indebted, still! Sinner as I am, if I were a million times as sinful as I am, and then had a million souls, each one a million times more sinful than my own—I would still trust His atoning blood to cleanse me, and Him to save me! By Your agony and bloody sweat, by Your cross and passion, by Your precious death and burial, by Your glorious resurrection and ascension, by Your intercession for the guilty at the right hand of God, O Christ, I feel that I can repose in You! May you come to this point, all of you—that Jesus is abundantly able to save.

You have been a thief, have you? The last person that was in our Lord’s near company on earth was the dying thief. “Oh, but,” you say, “I have been foul in life; I have defiled myself with all manner of evil.” But those with whom He associates now *were* all of them, once unclean—for they confess that they have washed their robes, and made them white in His blood! Their robes were once so filthy that nothing but His heart’s blood could make them white! Jesus is a great Savior, greater than my tongue can tell. I fail to speak His worth, and I should still fail to do so, even if I could speak heaven in every word, and express infinity in every sentence! Not all the tongues of men, or of angels can fully set forth the greatness of the grace of our Redeemer. Trust Him! Are you afraid to trust Him? Then make a dash for it. Venture to do so—

***“Venture on Him, venture wholly;
Let no other trust intrude.”***

“Look unto Me,” He says, “and be you saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.” Look! Look now! Look to Him alone, and as you look to Him with the look of faith, He will look on you with loving acceptance, and say, “Great is your faith: be it unto you even as you will.” You shall be saved at this very hour; and though you came into this house of prayer grievously vexed with a devil, you shall go out at peace with God, and as restful as an angel! God grant you this blessing for Christ’s sake. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Matthew 15:21-34.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—34 (VERSION II) 622, 624.

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